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QUOTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 4673

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SUBJ: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S
ACCESSION

REF: A. BANGKOK 2498 B. FBIS BK 200229Z MAR 75
C. BANGKOK 4645 D. BANGKOK 4488

BEGIN SUMMARY: SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE NEW RTG HAVE IMPORTANT
IMPLICATIONS FOR ONGOING U.S. PROGRAMS AND THE U.S.-THAI
RELATIONSHIP. OUR SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA THROUGH THAILAND MAY
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BE RESTRICTED; SIZEABLE TROOP WITHDRAWALS IN A LIMITED

TIME FRAME MAY BE HARD TO AVERT SINCE MANY THAI NOW DISCOUNT THE VALUE OF OUR MILITARY PRESENCE; THE FUTURE OF OUR LARGE SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE INSTALLATIONS ALSO APPEARS LESS THANCERTAIN; ON DOD-INVITED CONTRACTORS, THE U.S. WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO DO SOME COMPROMISING; KHUKRIT WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BE LESS NATIONALISTIC THAN THE DEMOCRATS WERE ON THE TEMCO CASE. DESPITE THESE PROVISOS, THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT IS TOO NEW IN OFFICE TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT MEANS ALL IT SAYS. KHUKRIT MAY HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ON MATTERS AFFECTING U.S. INTERESTS, AND WE PROPOSE TO STALL FOR TIME UNTIL WE CAN GET A BETTER READING ON THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS. WE WILL BE USING MULTIPLE CHANNELS TO INFLUENCE THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDES ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US. IT WILL BE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT NOT TO OVERREACT IN PUBLIC. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO FORETELL IN DETAIL THE COURSE WHICH THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S SOJOURN IN POWER WILL TAKE, CERTAIN INFERENCES ARE POSSIBLE REGARDING U.S. RELATIONS WITH THAILAND AND THE POSSIBLE FATE OF MANY OF THE INTRICATE OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WE HAVE WITH THE RTG. WE LIST BELOW SOME KEY ISSUES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, AND DISCUSS THEIR RELEVANCE TO US.

A. INSTABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT: THE PROBABLE FRAGILITY AND INSTABILITY OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO WRING PROMPT AND COOPERATIVE DECISIONS OUT OF THE CABINET ON ANY BUT THE LEAST CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS. ON ALL SUBJECTS THE GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO HAVE ONE EYE OVER ITS SHOULDER TOWARDS PARLIAMENT, STUDENT AGITATORS, AND THE PRESS.

B. AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS CAMBODIA: THERE IS PUBLIC CONTROVERSY IN THAILAND OVER THE INTIMACY OF RTG MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE U.S., UNCERTAINTY OVER THE CONTINUING VALIDITY OF OUR DEFENSE COMMITMENTS TO THAILAND, AND A THAI DESIRE TO BE IN A POSITION TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH WHATEVER FORCES EMERGE IN CAMBODIA; (REF A). FOR ALL THESE REASONS, THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT MAY DECIDE TO CURTAIL OUR ABILITY TO SUPPORT THE GKR THROUGH THAILAND. KHUKRIT'S UPHOLDING OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND DEFENSE

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MINISTER GENERAL PRAMAN ADIREKSAN'S PUBLIC STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT (REFS B & C) HAVE RESTRICTED THE RTG'S ROOM FOR MANEUVER.

C. U.S. TROOP PRESENCE: THE RAPID AND PROBABLE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS HAS SUDDENLY BECOME A BIPARTISAN ARTICLE OF FAITH WITH BOTH THE SENI AND KHUKRIT GOVERNMENTS AND WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. WHILE KHUKRIT'S STATEMENT ON THIS MATTER (REF D) HAS THE

APPROPRIATE CAVEATS ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION AT THE TIME AND THAI NATIONAL INTERESTS, KHUKRIT MAY HAVE TROUBLE INVOKING THESE CAVEATS EVEN SHOULD HE WANT TO. THE NEW RTG IS LESS LIKELY THAN EVEN THE SANYA GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT AN INDIAN OCEAN RATIONALE FOR A LONGER TERM RESIDUAL U.S. TROOP PRESENCE IN THAILAND.

D. THAI TRUST IN THE U.S. CREDIBILITY AS AN ALLY: THE THAI CLEARLY SEE THE INTERNAL DIVISIONS IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES ON SUPPLEMENTARY AID TO VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. THEY ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE CURRENT GVN ABANDONMENT OF THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND THE NORTHERN PROVINCES OF MILITARY REGION I. THE U.S. AIR FORCE IN THAILAND IS TAKING NO COMBAT ROLE IN TRYING TO FRESTALL THESE DISQUIETING EVENTS. THE THAI HAVE NOTED RECENT STATEMENTS IN WASHINGTON THAT THESE FORCES WILL PLAY NO SUCH ROLE. MANY THAI THEREFORE QUESTION THE UTILITY OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND, AND THIS QUESTIONING HAS ALREADY LED TO DECREASING ENTHUSIASM FOR CONTINUING THAT PRESENCE.

E. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN'S MERCURIAL NATURE: DEALING WITH CHATCHAI AS FOREIGN MINISTER IS LIKELY TO BE EVEN MORE TRYING THAN WHEN HE WAS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER UNDER EITHER THANOM OR CHARUNPHAN. HE WILL BE TRYING TO RIDE HIS PRESENT PORTFOLIO TO VICTORY IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS AND GREATER THINGS THEREAFTER. WE CAN ANTICIPATE AN EXASPERATING SERIES OF NEWS LEAKS AND PUBLIC POSTURING THAT WILL NOT HELP US MUCH. HIS KHORAT CONSTITUENCY, AND THEIR ECONOMIC ENTHUSIASM FOR THE AIRBASE, MAY BE SOME RESTRAINT ON HIS BEING IN THE FOREFRONT OF AGITATION FOR A U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL, HOWEVER.

F. FUTURE OF OUR INTELLIGENCE INSTALLATIONS: PHICHAI RATTAKUN, DURING HIS BRIEF TENURE AS FOREIGN MINISTER, IMPLIED THAT THE
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RTG WOULD CONSIDER ONLY OUR COMBAT ARMS IN DISCUSSING WITHDRAWALS. WITH CHATCHAI, THERE IS GREATER PROBABILITY THAT THE RTG WILL ALSO SCRUTINIZE OUR LARGE SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE INSTALLATIONS.

G. CHATCHAI'S ROMANCE WITH THE PRC: THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING CHATCHAI'S LAST TRIP TO THE PRC, WHEREIN HE SOUGHT AND RECEIVED VIP TREATMENT TO UPSTAGE THE THAI TRADE DELEGATION THAT PRECEDED HIM BY LESS THAN TWO WEEKS, INDICATE THAT CHATCHAI MAY HAVE PROMISED PEKING SOME QUID PRO QUOS. CHIEF AMONG THESE WOULD BE EARLY DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION. THE PRC MAY ALSO PRESS REGARDING THE CONTINUING PRESENCE IN NORTH THAILAND OF THE CHINESE IRREGULAR FORCES (NEE KMT).

WHILE THE PRC HAS INDICATED THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE PARTICULAR PROBLEMS WITH OUR CONTINUED MILITARY PRESENCE, IT MAY NOT

FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT OUR LARGE SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.

H. CONTINUING POLITICIZATION OF TEMCO: THE AGITATION AGAINST THE THAILAND EXPLORATION AND MINING CO. LTD. (TEMCO), WHICH UNION CARBIDE OWNS JOINTLY WITH A DUTCH FIRM, WILL CONTINUE. KHUKRIT'S GOVERNMENT WILL FIND IT POLITICALLY DIFFICULT TO BE LESS NATIONALISTIC ON THE CASE THAN HIS OLDER BROTHER SENI WAS DURING THE DEMOCRAT-SOCIAL AGRARIAN GOVERNMENT'S BRIEF STINT IN POWER. KHUKRIT TOLD THE PRESS MARCH 20 "THAT CONCESSION WILL HAVE TO BE ANNULLED FOR CERTAIN." THE FOREIGN INVESTMENT CLIMATE WILL SUFFER.

I. DOD-INVITED CONTRACTORS: WE DOUBT THAT THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT WILL FIND IT POLITICALLY POSSIBLE TO BE ANY MORE FORTHCOMING ON THIS AGING BETE NOIRE THAN PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN. WE WILL HAVE TO BE READY BEFORE THE CURRENTLY-ESTABLISHED DEADLINE TO MAKE OUR PEACE ON THIS QUESTION.

2. COMMENT: THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT PROVE ANTI-AMERICAN IN ITS GENERAL ORIENTATION OR PRIVATE STANCE, BUT IT WILL FACE SERIOUS LOCAL CRITICISM OF BOTH ITS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES. GIVEN ITS PRECARIOUS PARLIAMENTARY BALANCE, THE GOVERNMENT COULD WELL CHOOSE DISCRETION OVER VALOR IN PRESSING ITS CASE WITH THE PUBLIC ON BOTH FRONTS. IT MAY, THEREFORE, WANT TO EASE PUBLIC HOSTILITY BY TAKING A NATIONALISTIC LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE
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ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, THE KUKRIT GOVERNMENT IS SO NEW IN OFFICE THAT WE HAVE NOT YET HAD TIME TO ASSESS THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT WILL SUIT ITS ACTIONS TO ITS WORDS, PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE QUESTIONS OF WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES AND U.S. SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA FROM THAILAND. WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE AT THIS POINT TO REACH THE HARD AND FAST CONCLUSION THAT THE KUKRIT GOVERNMENT MEANS LITERALLY EVERYTHING IT HAS SAID AFFECTING U.S. INTERESTS. IT MIGHT HAVE SOBER SECOND THOUGHTS, BASED ON CONSIDERATIONS OF LONG-TERM RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., THAT COULD TEMPER SOME OF ITS MORE IMMODERATE PUBLIC POSITIONS. WE PROPOSE TO STALL FOR TIME AND NOT TAKE THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT ON DIRECTLY UNTIL WE CAN GET A BETTER READING ON THESE MATTERS. AT THE SAME TIME WE WILL USE ALL AVAILABLE CHANNELS TO INFLUENCE THE ATTITUDES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT ON ISSUES IMPORTANT TO US. IT WILL BE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT NOT TO OVERREACT IN PUBLIC (SEPTELS RECOMMEND OUR PRESS POSTURE ON THE ISSUES OF TROOP WITHDRAWALS AND SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA.)

4. WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA,
SINCE OUR SCOOT ACTIVITIES ARE CONTINUING AND UNTIL SUCH
TIME AS THEY ARE INTERFERED WITH, WE DO NOT INTEND TO
RAISE THIS SUBJECT FORMALLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT WILL
ATTEMPT TO PROTECT OUR FLANKS THROUGH KRIT, KRIANGSAK,
AND OTHERS.

5. IN A SEPARATE TELEGRAM, WE WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS
ON HOW TO ADDRESS THE FORCE WITHDRAWAL QUESTION.

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